

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4254
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0408

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, GY
SUBJECT: BURNHAM'S HEALTH

REF: GEORGETOWN 0337

SUMMARY: BURNHAM'S ABSENCE FROM CULTURAL PRESENTATION STATED IN HONOR OF HIS 54TH BIRTHDAY AND FROM OFFICIAL REPUBLIC DAY COMMEMORATION INDICATES THAT HIS RECOVERY HAS BEEN SLOWER THAN EXPECTED. HOWEVER, PHOTOS OF HIM GREETING VISITORS HAVE APPEARED IN PRESS AND HE IS KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH KEY CABINET OFFICIALS. HIS SCHEDULED TRIPS TO MOSCOW AND TO LONDON FOR COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF STATE CONFERENCE REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN CANCELLED. VISIT TO CANADA REMAINS SCHEDULED, ALTHOUGH SOME CONFUSION EXISTS WHETHER IT WILL BE IN MAY OR JUNE. WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT SEVERAL MONTHS WILL PASS BEFORE BURNHAM RESUMES TO FULL DUTIES AND THAT HE MAY NEVER BE
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ABLE TO PERFORM AT HIS FORMER PACE. NEVERTHELESS, EVEN FROM HIS SICK BED HE APPEARS TO PROVIDE GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND HIS PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM DID NOT ATTEND LAVISH CULTURAL/HISTORICAL PRESENTATION OF SKITS ON GUYANA'S HISTORICAL HEROES AT CULTURAL CENTER FEBRUARY 20 WHICH WAS ARRANGED IN

HONOR OF HIS 54TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AND DID NOT DELIVER TRADITIONAL SPEECH ON FEB 22 TO COMMEMORATE REPUBLIC DAY. BURNHAM'S ABSENCE FROM THESE OFFICIAL AND SYMBOLIC OCCASIONS AND HIS FAILURE TO MAKE ANY OUTINGS AS GESTURE TO DISPEL PERVERSIVE RUMORS ABOUT STATE OF HIS HEALTH PROBABLY INDICATES THAT HIS RECOVERY HAS BEEN SLOWER THAN HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN ANNOUNCED. CHRONICLE OF FEB. 21 RAN TWO PHOTOS OF PM MEETING WITH PARTY REPRESENTATIVES WHO REPORTEDLY PAID HIM A SHORT VISIT TO PRESENT A BIRTHDAY GIFT. PHOTOS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY BRIEF COLUMN SAYING BURNHAM WAS UP AND ABOUT AND IN JOVIAL MOOD AT HIS GEORGETOWN RESIDENCE. ACCORDING TO CAPTION, HE CHATTED IN LIVELY MANNER ABOUT MUSIC, ART AND CULTURE.

2. IN ADDITION TO VISITS FROM SEVERAL CABINET MINISTERS ON OFFICIAL MATTERS, BURNHAM HAS RECEIVED SEVERAL GUESTS. ON FEB. 18 HE MET FOR ONE AND ONE-HALF HOURS WITH COMMONWEALTH GENERAL SECRETARY SHRIDATH RAMPHAL. THREE DAYS LATER BURNHAM CALLED WEST INDIES CRICKET CAPTAIN CLIVE LLOYD TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON MAKING HIS 11TH TEST CENTURY. CHRONICLE OF FEB. 23 CARRIED PHOTO OF BURNHAM RECEIVING VISITING CUBAN VICE PRESIDENT JUAN ALMEIDA BOSQUE. CAPTION WITH PHOTO STATED THEIR DISCUSSIONS CENTERED ON MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST TO CUBA AND GUYANA.

3. FONMIN WILLS HAS TOLD CHARGE THAT BURNHAM'S PLANNED TRIP TO SOVIET UNION AND TO COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF STATE CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN LONDON IN JUNE HAVE BEEN CANCELLED. WILLS AND MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HOYTE WILL VISIT USSR AND WILLS WILL ATTEND THE LONDON COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE. SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFUSION EXISTS AS TO WHEN BURNHAM INTENDS TO VISIT CANADA. WILLS TOLD CHARGE THAT PM'S VISIT SCHEDULED FOR MAY HAD BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL JUNE BUT CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER ROGER HAS IMPRESSION VISIT IS STILL ON FOR MAY, AND TOLD CHARGE THAT A JUNE VISIT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE OF PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU'S HEAVY SCHEDULE.

4. COMMENT: AS OPPOSED TO TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN OFFICIALS WERE TALKING ABOUT BURNHAM MAKING OUTINGS IN NEAR FUTURE, WE HAVE HEARD NO SUCH COMMENTS RECENTLY. VISITORS HAVE TOLD US HE LOOKS PALE. IN HIS REPUBLIC DAY SPEECH, ACTING PM REID STATED BURNHAM WAS STILL ENJOYING WELL-DESERVED PERIOD OF REST AND DID NOT ALLUDE TO WHEN HE IS EXPECTED TO RESUME OFFICIAL DUTIES.

5. WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT BURNHAM WILL NOT RESUME HIS FULL DUTIES FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND HE MAY NEVER OPERATE AT HIS PREVIOUS FRENETIC PACE. WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THIS JUDGMENT, BUT DRAW IT FROM SUBTLE HINTS WE RECEIVE FROM WILLS AND OTHER MINISTERS.

ALSO THE MANNER IN WHICH WILLS, JACK AND HOYTE APPEAR TO
BE INCREASING THEIR DECISION-MAKING ROLES HAS A CERTAIN
RING OF PERMANENCE.....8. THERE IS NO OPEN TALK OF SUCCESSION, B
UT
WILLS STILL MENTIONS CABINET RIVALRIES IN HIS TALKS WITH THE CHARGE.
DESPITE THESE THINGS, HOWEVER, BURNHAM REMAINS THE LEADER AND
EVEN NOW GIVES GENERAL DIRECTION TO THE GOG. SPECULATION ABOUT
BURNHAM'S HEALTH IS STRONG, BUT POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS STABLE.
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